(a) whether Government are aware that the new Cochin Airport is running at a loss due to the non- utilisation of the capacity;

(b) whether Government have received any request to upgrade the airport to International airport which attracts good air traffic; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to declare Cochin as an International Airport?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) The Government has declared Cochin Airport at Nedumbassery as international airport.

Holding of Hijacked Plane at Amritsar Airport

3227. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleaed to State:

(a) whether Government are aware about the statement of former Director General of Punjab, K.P.S. Gill, that the hijacked IC-814 should have been disabled at Amritsar Airport and prevented from leaving Indian territory, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 13th March, 2000; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) When the aircraft landed at Amritsar, concrete and specific information in respect of the numbers, nationality, weaponry, professionalism and commitment of the hijackers was scanty and speculative. On the other hand, messages being received from the hijacked aircraft were tense and demanding. Precipitate action, in the absence of even basic information was judged as being fraught with unacceptable levels of risk.

Operation of 50 Seater Aircraft in Gujarat

3228. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government have considered the viability of operating of 50 seater aircraft by Indian Airlines or other private airlines from some airports in Gujarat;

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.